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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRAGUE 000755

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETTC](#) [MNUC](#) [PGOV](#) [EUN](#) [EZ](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE CZECH POLICY TOWARD IRAN, AND
CZECH OBSERVATIONS ON EU AND IRAN

REF: A. PRAGUE 745
[1](#)B. PRAGUE 746

Classified By: ADCM Mike Dodman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and comment: This is the final of three cables on Czech-Iranian relations. The Czech Government is likely to remain solidly aligned with the USG on Iran. Czech mainstream parties whose platforms are supportive of USG positions vis-a-vis the Iranian nuclear issue will occupy 174 of the 200 seats in the new Chamber of Deputies. Only the unreformed Communist Party and certain leftist factions of the Social Democratic Party remain either ambivalent or hostile to our objectives in Iran. The GOCR, already locked in a serious dispute with Iran over the hosting of Radio Farda, is unlikely to modify its policies to enable assistance to Iran's nuclear program outside of a USG and EU3 approved-framework. End summary and comment.

Czech Internal Political Dynamics and Future Iran Policy

[1](#)2. (C) Despite the uncertainly following the Czech Republic's June election stalemate, the Czechs' relatively strong policies vis-a-vis Iran are unlikely to change in the near future. There is near unanimity among most major parties on the issue, with the exception of the Communist Party and a left-wing bloc of Social Democrats (CSSD) led by former Foreign Minister Jan Kavan and Vladimir Lastuvka -- neither of whom won seats in the June elections. Potential center-right coalition partners such Civic Democrats, Christian Democrats and most of the Green Party are generally Atlanticist in orientation, mistrustful of Iran's intentions, and committed to preventing Iran's acquisition of nuclear materials. The more moderate factions of the CSSD, who have been ascendant since the CSSD came to power in 1998, are equally uncomfortable with Iran's nuclear ambitions. Successive CSSD governments under PMs Zeman, Spidla, Gross, and Paroubek have pursued Iran policies broadly congruent with USG goals in the region, despite the pressure of Iran's de facto trade embargo against the Czech Republic in retaliation for Radio Farda broadcasts (Ref A).

[1](#)3. (C) Although the Czech Republic's unreformed Communist Party (KSCM) has often been at the center of provocative events such as the visit of an Iranian parliamentary delegation to Prague in late 2005, the KSCM may actually be less skeptical of U.S. policy than certain small factions within CSSD. KSCM may take advantage of official invitations, visits, and similar provocations as a gesture to their anti-U.S., anti-NATO, and (to a lesser extent) anti-EU constituents, but they have no significant ideological or political attraction to the idea of a nuclear-armed Iran.

Rhetorical support for Iran serves as an essentially cost-free method of differentiating themselves from other parties and, more recently, appealing to latent anti-American sentiment. It is also unlikely that this still-stigmatized party will hold sufficient influence in a new coalition to directly influence policy on critical issues such as Iran.

¶4. (C) Furthermore, even in the unlikely event that KSCM gained some authority in a future government, it is uncertain that they would pursue a major shift in Czech policy. Flirting with Iran carries some political benefits for the Communists at the moment with no corresponding cost; this could change if the KSCM had a more substantive policy role. (Note: Although reflective of different times and political circumstances, it is also worth noting that Communist Czechoslovakia, freed by ideology from the tension of competing political and commercial objectives, had a commendable nonproliferation record. End note)

¶5. (C) The Lastuvka/Kavan wing of the CSSD on the other hand, presents a somewhat different picture. Fortunately this leftist faction of the CSSD remains a minority within the party. Although neither Lastuvka nor Kavan sit in the new parliament (and with 53 freshmen CSSD MPs in the new chamber, it is still difficult to determine how "factions" will ultimately sort themselves out), their thinking may still retain influence in the party. According to Israeli DCM Walid el-Haya, when confronted with concerns about Iran's weapons program, Lastuvka bluntly told el-Haya that he considers an Iranian nuclear weapon to be "an accomplished fact," and implied that the Czechs should simply protect their own interests in such circumstances. Furthermore, former Parliamentarian and FM Jan Kavan has gone consistently on record expressing his support for Czech participation in all aspects of the Iranian energy sector, including its nuclear

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program. MEP Jana Hybaskova, who served as Ambassador to Kuwait while Kavan was FM, told Poloff that Kavan has for years been attracted by the possibility of lucrative contracts for Czech firms involved in such services. (Hybaskova has also been critical of outgoing PM Paroubek for allegedly being more concerned about potential exports of Czech trolley cars than non-proliferation threats, although admits that this has not had any impact on actual Czech policies towards Iran.)

Czechs Paint a Discouraging Picture of the EU and Iran

¶6. (C) Several Czech diplomats and observers present a somewhat pessimistic image of a dissolute EU that is unable (and to some extent unwilling) to effectively face the Iranian nuclear issue. MFA Security Policy Director Petr Kaiser told Poloff that the vanguard position of the EU3 countries has allowed other EU members to effectively disengage from this difficult and contentious issue. He said the structure of various EU meetings and conferences on the issue had simply consisted of the EU3 countries briefing other states. According to Kaiser, with the EU demanding, at most, a passive acquiescence to the EU3 policy direction, many states have been willing to adopt more detached and circumspect attitudes toward Iran and rely the U.S. and its EU3 partners to move the issue forward, with all of the potential difficulties that such progress will entail. Kaiser stated that, along with the Czechs, he considered Holland, Poland, and Slovakia the most assertive and the most constructive non-EU3 partners on the issue.

¶7. (C) Conservative MEP Jana Hybaskova essentially mirrored Kaiser's bleak picture of the EU in a separate discussion. According to Hybaskova, many EP members are woefully uninformed on the issue and unduly influenced and buffeted by currents of opinion, some either inaccurate or irrelevant to the debate. Several of Hybaskova's colleagues, for example,

emerged from meeting with the Iranian Ambassador in Brussels parroting the ambassador's line that "Iran only has low-enriched uranium for power plants, not highly enriched uranium needed for weapons"; they were evidently either unaware or unconcerned that the enrichment process is the same for both types. She also indicated that a significant number of her colleagues maintained ties and conducted events with representatives of PMOI/Mek (People's Movement of Iran/Mujahedin e Khalq) from Paris. Domestic politics within member states also exert a heavy influence on EP views of Iran. Although many MEPs have been galvanized by Ahmadenejad's fiery recent rhetoric (Hybaskova was gathering MEP signatures on a petition to at least symbolically declare the Iranian President persona non grata in advance of the World Cup in Germany), both Hybaskova and Kaiser stated that the Iran crisis would "demand U.S. leadership."

Some General Czech Views of Iran

¶8. (C) During the course of our discussions with Czech officials working on Iran, several took the opportunity to pass on reports and impressions from their staff in Tehran, and also other general MFA impressions of Iran. Although the Czech Republic is a small country, their long-term commercial and diplomatic presence in Iran, their prowess in civil and nuclear engineering, and their status as a proactive and aggressive USG partner on security issues help frame their views. On Iran, as with other security matters, the Czechs fight well above their weight class.

¶9. (C) THE INDIA EXAMPLE. Ludvik Mrazek from the MFA Department of Middle Eastern and African Affairs expressed a sentiment, based upon his close work the Iranians in the past, that Iran had drawn some counterproductive conclusions from the example of India. In Iran's view, India's defiant nuclear tests of 1998, far from carrying any substantial penalties, have helped India emerge into the top tier of regional and even global leaders. Iran views India's emergence as a fully declared nuclear power as critical to Indian economic and diplomatic achievements in recent years. While supportive of recent USG initiatives involving the Indian nuclear program, GOCR officials have also privately expressed concern about the initiative's effect on the global nonproliferation regime. They see in Iran a strong illustration of their apprehensions.

¶10. (C) IRAN,S PUBLIC AND THE NUCLEAR ISSUE. According to Petr Kaiser, the Czech Charge, in Tehran presents an image

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to the GOCR of an Iranian public strongly supportive of their country's nuclear ambitions. The Iranians see themselves as a historically important power with a destiny to assume a leadership position in the region; nuclear power - and even nuclear weapons - are inseparable from that status. Discouragingly, the Czech mission related that even relatively liberal and reformist elements of Iranian society share the conviction that Iran has an unquestioned right to a full nuclear program. While some Iranians may see the drive to enhance their nuclear capabilities unwise, provocative, or a poor use of resources, virtually none see the effort itself as illegitimate. In the Czech view, looking for political space with which to divide different elements of the Iranian body politic on the nuclear issue will be a challenging task.

¶11. (C) INTERNAL STRUGGLES AND THE STABILITY OF THE IRANIAN REGIME. Czech diplomats, including both Mrazek and the Czech Charge' in Tehran, while mindful of the support the government has on the nuclear issue, are not as certain of the overall stability of the Ahmadenejad regime. The Czech Mission in Teheran sees Ahmadenejad producing a significant change in the upper echelons of the government and directly challenging the established interests of the clerical establishment. In this view, Ahmadenejad is surrounding

himself with his former colleagues from within Revolutionary Guards Corps, the intelligence and security services, and the military. Their background and expertise lie within the national security apparatus, and their formative experiences were the brutal internal and external struggles surrounding the Iran-Iraq War. The Czechs see in Teheran signs of veiled clashes between the conservative clerics who have ruled Iran since the Revolution and Ahmadenejad's "New Guard" of former security officials. They consider the likely result to be more such hidden power struggles and, along with them, significantly reduced flexibility in negotiations involving nuclear issues.

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